Introduction

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, a civil rights activist noted the critical role of women and youth in the modern Black freedom movement. "It's no secret that young people and women led organizationally," he observed. (1) The remark has been alluded to so often, it is in danger of becoming a cliche. And yet the names most people associate with the movement are male--Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, to name just a few. (2) Even when public and scholarly recognition has been afforded to individual women, the full nature of their participation frequently remains obscured. (3) Still missing--but which the books reviewed here begin to address--are assessments of the collective power of ordinary, anonymous women, the unsung heroines who were "the backbone of the movement." Lest we think that several decades of women's history scholarship have put such concerns to rest, one need only note the recent and widely acclaimed study of the Birmingham Movement that not only ignores women, but proclaims their irrelevance. Thus, historian Glen Eskew informs us, "In contrast to the rural South where women often organized the movement, in the urban South, the men led, organized, and participated." (4) While few have embraced Eskew's perspective overtly, scholars of the movement generally give the obligatory nod to women before relegating them to the shadows.

Why this anomaly? Why do most observers agree that Black women were important players in the freedom movement, while at the same time a widespread collective amnesia persists concerning their participation? Why do African American women remain marginalized in movement scholarship even as sociologist Charles Payne notes that "every conference on the movement calls attention to the need" to address women's involvement? Conventional definitions of leadership, protest, and politics that have shaped the scholarship as well as the memories of activists; a media-driven history that, until recently, has characterized much of the work on the movement; and what historian Darlene Clark Hine has called a Black female culture of dissemblance (a survival strategy that Black women deployed to mask their activities from wider public view) offer several explanations. (5)

But what does Black women's participation tell us that we don't already know about the African American freedom movement? Aside from documenting that women were present, does their inclusion counter widely held assumptions and interpretations of the modern civil rights...
The Civil Rights Movement was a social movement in the United States that fought to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. While we continue to recognize the leaders of this movement and those who contributed, the men of the movement are far more celebrated and remembered than the women. In this informational text, Barrett Smith discusses the role that women played in the Civil Rights Movement. As you read, take notes on how women contributed to the Civil Rights Movement and how others responded to their contributions. “Photograph of a Young Woman at the Civi... Many women played important roles in the Civil Rights Movement, from leading local civil rights organizations to serving as lawyers on school segregation lawsuits. Their efforts to lead the movement were often overshadowed by men, who still get more attention and credit for its successes in popular historical narratives and commemorations. Many women experienced gender discrimination and sexual harassment within the movement and later turned towards the feminist movement in the 1970s. The Civil Rights History Project interviews with participants in the struggle include both expressions of pride... Read reviews from world’s largest community for readers. Historians have long agreed that women--bla... Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking “Women And The Civil Rights Movement, 1954–1965” as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. Currently Reading. Read. Other editions. Enlarge cover.